



Congress of the United States

November 1, 2023

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington D.C., 20202

The Honorable Richard Cordray
Chief Operating Officer
Office of Federal Student Aid
830 First St. NE
Washington D.C., 20002

Dear Secretary Cardona and Mr. Cordray:

I write to request that the Department of Education use its authority to quickly improve the financial aid process by ensuring veterans' noneducation benefits do not impact the income calculations for expected contributions.

As you know, the most vital step in applying for federal grants, work-study, and loans for college is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Recent updates to the FAFSA greatly increased the accessibility of financial aid for military veterans and low-income families seeking financial aid.

The FAFSA Simplification Act was enacted into law as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and was further amended by spending legislation the next year. Through this bill, the form was shortened by 72 questions and allowed students to link their IRS account with their FAFSA account. This legislation also ensured that the amount of military aid a student or parent receives for a college education would not defer their eligibility or reduce the amount of student aid that the student could receive from federal and state programs.

Over the past three years, the Department of Education has implemented these changes in phases. The final phase of the Department's implementation of the changes will occur at the end of 2023. I understand that the Department is taking steps to remove certain untaxed income items from the application's need analysis during this final phase, and I urge the Department to remove any questions pertaining to veterans' noneducation benefits from the FAFSA.

My office received reports that the inclusion of disability income, or other benefits, can dramatically increase expected family contributions. Those funds are reserved to compensate veterans for service-connected disabilities, not pay for their education or their dependent's education.

I urge you to swiftly make this simple improvement to the FAFSA questionnaire. We must ensure that our veterans are not financially punished for their service to our country. Any questions pertaining to veterans' noneducation benefits must be removed from the FAFSA. Thank you for your leadership. I appreciate your attention to this important issue and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Neguse", is positioned above the printed name.

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress